

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-09

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R 130309Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2931

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 1249

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E O 11652 GDS

TAGS PINT, AS

SUBJ: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SIMMERS WHILE TASMANIA SEETHES

1. HOWARD O'NEILL, ACTING ALP STATE SECRETARY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, TOLD LABATT AUG 13, THAT HARRADINE AFFAIR CAUSING "NO INTEREST, LET ALONE CONCERN," IN HIS STATE PARTY O'NEILL IS CHIEFLY CONCERNED WITH CAREFULLY WATCHING SOUTH AUSTRALIAN POLITICS, INCLUDING MOVES BY THE NEWLY-ELECTED LEADER OF LIBERAL OPPOSITION DR DAVID TONKIN, WHO HAS REPLACED BUNGLING BRUCE EASTICK.

2. O'NEILL SAID SOUTH AUSTRALIA ON RECORD PAST 18 MONTHS AS WILLING TO SUPPORT HARRADINE'S REINSTATEMENT AND "TO CARRY BALL FOR HIM" IN FEDERAL EXECUTIVE. HOWEVER, IN INTERIM, HARRADINE HAD BEEN "NO HELP." O'NEILL
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SAID "MAN IS ARROGANT AND WILLING MARTYR."

UNFORTUNATELY, HE "SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING HIMSELF
AND READY TO TAKE ALP DOWN WITH HIM."

3. AT SAME TIME, O'NEILL, WHO IS GENERALLY VERY HIGH
ON FEDERAL SECRETARY DAVID COMBE, WAS CRITICAL OF "FAULTY
SECURITY" AT ALP EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD CANBERRA
JULY 31-AUG 2. HE SAID LEAK OF COMBE'S REPORT ON
BASS BY-ELECTION AND RESULTANT PRESS COMMENTS ON
MEETING WERE "DISASTROUS" AND LARGELY FAULT OF
COMBE, WHO NOW FACED "IMPOSSIBLE TASK IN ATTEMPTING TO BRING
TASMANIAN ALP BACK INTO LINE."

4. COMMENT: OBVIOUS THAT FEDERAL ALP WILL GET NO
SYMPATHY AND LITTLE HELP FROM DON DUNSTAN'S SOUTH
AUSTRALIA BRANCH. LABATT SPECULATES ON HOW MANY MORE
HARD LESSONS PARTY CENTRISTS IN CANBERRA, INCLUDING
SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS, NEED BEFORE GOING BACK TO HOE
GRASSROOTS WHERE STRENGTH STARTS. END COMMENT.

5. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN, S.A. LIBERAL PARTY'S
NEW LEADER TONKIN SAID HE FORESEES CONFUSED PERIOD
AHEAD WITH MANY DIFFICULTIES, BOTH POLITICAL AND
PERSONAL, BEFORE HE CAN REACH COMMON AGREEMENT WITH
BREAKAWAY LIBERAL MOVEMENT OF ROBIN MILLHOUSE. MILLHOUSE,
IN TURN, TOLD CONGEN THAT UNTIL ELECTORAL REFORM
LEGISLATION IS APPROVED IN NEW S.A. PARLIAMENT
SESSION, THERE CAN BE NO BASIS FOR GETTING TOGETHER
WITH L.P.

6. COMMENT: MILLHOUSE'S FLAT REJECTION OF LP-LM
COOPERATION AT THIS TIME IS CLEARLY BASED ON BASIC
LM TENET THAT OPPOSITION CANNOT WIN SOUTH AUSTRALIA
WITHOUT SUPPORT IN ADELAIDE. PRESENT GERRYMANDER
GROSSLY FAVORS RURAL DISTRICTS; BUT LM CONVINCED ROAD
TO POWER LIES THROUGH ADELAIDE AND SUBURBS, WHICH
HAVE BEEN PRO-DUNSTAN AND WHICH ARE UNSYMPATHETIC TO
RURAL TYPES LIKE VETERINARIAN DR BRUCE EASTICK,
RECENTLY DEPOSED LIBERAL PARTY LEADER. UNTIL ALP AND
LM ACTIVELY PUT THROUGH ELECTORAL REFORM LAW, TONKIN
AND LP WILL CONTINUE TO DREAM OF BRINGING LM BACK
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INTO LIBERAL FOLD WITHOUT LOSING ADVANTAGES OF
GERRYMANDERED COUNTRY BASE. THUS TONKIN TOLD CONGEN
HE HOPES SOMEONE IN LM WILL DEFECT FROM MILLHOUSE
AND THUS TORPEDO ELECTORAL REFORM LAW; BUT
SO FAR THERE NO SIGNS OF SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.
BRAND

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NNN

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